

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE

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EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, XF, UN

SUBJECT: ATHERTON BRIEFS UN OFFICIALS ON SECRETARY VANCE'S
TRIP TO MIDDLE EAST

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: ASSISTANT SECRETARY ATHERTON ON
FEBRUARY 23 BRIEFED UN UNDER SECRETARIES GENERAL GUYER AND
URQUHART AND SPECIAL ASSISTANT JONAH ON SECRETARY VANCE'S
TRIP TO MIDDLE EAST.

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ATHERTON ALSO MET SEPARATELY WITH SECRETARY GENERAL WALD-
HEIM. GUYER OPENED CONVERSATION BY NOTING THAT DURING HIS
VISIT TO MOSCOW FOLLOWING THE SECRETARY GENERAL'S TRIP TO
MIDDLE EAST SOVIETS GAVE CLEAR IMPRESSION OF "BEING OUT OF
THE GAME". SOVIETS WERE LOOKING FORWARD TO SECRETARY
VANCE'S TRIP TO MOSCOW IN MARCH, BUT AT THIS STAGE THERE
APPEARED TO BE NO CHANGE IN THEIR ESTABLISHED POSITIONS
WITH REGARD TO GENEVA CONFERENCE. ATHERTON THEN PROVIDED
HIGHLIGHTS OF SECRETARY'S TRIP. ALL PARTIES AGREED WITH
SECRETARY'S DESCRIPTION OF THREE FUNDAMENTAL SUBSTANTIVE

ISSUES: NATURE OF PEACE, WITHDRAWAL AND BOUNDARIES, AND PALESTINIAN ASPECT. THEY ALSO AGREED THAT OBJECTIVE WAS A COMPREHENSIVE, FINAL SETTLEMENT, THAT IF PROCEDURAL ISSUES COULD BE RESOLVED THERE WOULD BE NO PRECONDITIONS WITH

RESPECT TO WHAT COULD BE DISCUSSED AT GENEVA, AND THAT ALL CONCERNED WOULD WORK TOWARDS CONVENING GENEVA CONFERENCE IN SECOND HALF OF 1977. END SUMMARY.

2. UNDER SECRETARY GENERAL ROBERT GUYER OPENED DISCUSSION BY COMMENTING ON HIS TRIP TO MOSCOW WHERE HE BRIEFED FIRST DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER KUZNETSOV ON SYG WALDHEIM'S MIDDLE EAST TRIP. GUYER SAID SOVIETS GAVE DISTINCT IMPRESSION OF BEING "OUT OF THINGS" AND THEY WERE WAITING WITH KEEN INTEREST FOR VISIT OF SECRETARY VANCE IN LATE MARCH, AND FOR RETURN OF FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL SYTENKO. GUYER CHARACTERIZED SYTENKO VISIT TO MIDDLE EAST AS AN ASTONISHING EXERCISE OF "WATCHING AND SNOOPING". THE SOVIETS, ACCORDING TO GUYER, ARE STILL FEELING "OUT OF THE GAME, WANTING TO BE IN THE GAME", AND ARE BANKING ON THEIR CHANCES OF INCREASED INVOLVEMENT HAVING IMPROVED UNDER NEW ADMINISTRATION. THE SOVIET POSITION ON GENEVA CONFERENCE REMAINED UNCHANGED, VIZ., A TWO-PHASED CONFERENCE AS PROPOSED LAST OCTOBER AND PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATION FROM THE BEGINNING, OR AT LEAST WITHIN TWO OR THREE DAYS. (GUYER POINTED OUT THAT WHILE THE SOVIETS BLURRED SOMEWHAT THIS SECRET

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QUESTION OF PALESTINIAN PARTICIPATION WITHIN TWO OR THREE DAYS OF THE CONFERENCE'S CONVENING, IT MIGHT SIGNIFY A SHIFT.) FINALLY GUYER NOTED THAT SOVIETS TOOK MORE TO HEART PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATION THAN DID THE ARABS THEMSELVES. KUZNETSOV HAD MADE SPECIAL POINT THAT PLO DID NOT REPLY TO SOVIET MEMORANDUM OF OCTOBER 2.

3. ATHERTON THEN PROVIDED SUMMARY BRIEFING OF SECRETARY VANCE'S TRIP TO MIDDLE EAST FEBRUARY 14-21. SECRETARY EXPLAINED AT EACH CAPITAL PURPOSE OF HIS TRIP: (1) TO DEMONSTRATE THAT NEW ADMINISTRATION TAKES MIDDLE EAST QUESTION SERIOUSLY, THE U.S. IS ACTIVELY ENGAGED IN IT, AND HIS TRIP IS TO UNDERSCORE THIS ENGAGEMENT; (2) TO ESTABLISH PERSONAL RAPPORT WITH KEY LEADERS; AND (3) TO OBTAIN BEST POSSIBLE ESTIMATE OF CONCERNS, POSITIONS, AND OBJECTIVES OF EACH LEADER ON PROCEDURAL AND SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES.

4. CERTAIN CONCLUSIONS EMERGED DURING SECRETARY VANCE'S DISCUSSIONS. FIRST WAS FIRM DETERMINATION BY THE PARTIES TO MAKE A SERIOUS TRY THIS YEAR TO MOVE TOWARD SETTLEMENT. ARABS REPEATEDLY EMPHASIZED THAT THIS WAS A GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY WHICH SHOULD NOT BE CAST AWAY. WHILE ISRAEL WAS NOT READY TO TAKE DECISIONS AT THIS STAGE, THERE WAS

RECOGNITION BY ISRAEL THAT THIS CANNOT BE A YEAR OF NO-MOVEMENT AND THERE IS REAL NEED TO GEAR THEMSELVES ACCORDINGLY. SECRETARY ASKED AT EACH CAPITAL IF HE COULD SAY THAT ALL PARTIES HAD AGREED WE SHOULD ALL WORK TOWARD

CONVENING IN 2ND HALF OF 1977, AND ALL AGREED ALTHOUGH FAHMY AT FIRST HAD ARGUED NEED FOR EARLIER DATE EVEN THOUGH INITIAL MEETING DID NOT DEAL WITH SUBSTANCE. IN RESPONSE TO QUERY ABOUT WHEN IN SECOND HALF OF 1977 WE HAD IN MIND, ATHERTON SAID WE THOUGHT REALISTICALLY IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO ORGANIZE CONFERENCE BEFORE SEPTEMBER.

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5. ALL PARTIES ALSO MADE CLEAR THAT THEY WANTED THE U.S. TO CONTINUE TO BE ACTIVE.

6. SECRETARY ALSO ASKED ALL PARTIES IF THEY WOULD AGREE TO GO TO GENEVA CONFERENCE WITHOUT ANY PRECONDITIONS, IF PROCEDURAL QUESTION OF PALESTINIAN PARTICIPATION CAN BE RESOLVED. ALL AGREED TO THIS AS WELL, ALTHOUGH KHADDAM IN PARTICULAR INSISTED THAT SYRIA WOULD ADHERE TO OBJECTIVES (OR PRINCIPLES) OF TOTAL WITHDRAWAL, PALESTINIAN RIGHTS, ETC. ONCE CONFERENCE IS CONVENED. GUYER INTERJECTED THAT WALDHEIM PARTY ASSESSED KHADDAM AS MORE REASONABLE THAN IN PAST. TO JONAH'S QUERY ON GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTIONS AS WELL AS SC RESES 242 AND 338 SERVING AS PRECONDITIONS, ATHERTON NOTED THAT THERE WAS ACCEPTANCE BY ALL OF RESOLUTIONS 242 AND 338, WITHOUT INSISTENCE ON GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTIONS, ALTHOUGH KHADDAM HAD MENTIONED LATTER AS IMPORTANT TO PALESTINIANS.

7. ATHERTON CONTINUED BY NOTING THAT SECRETARY DIVIDED SUBSTANCE INTO THREE CATEGORIES: NATURE OF PEACE, WITHDRAWAL AND BOUNDARIES, AND PALESTINIAN ASPECT. ALL PARTIES AGREED THESE WERE KEY ISSUES AND DISCUSSED EACH CATEGORY AS WELL AS THE ISSUE OF PALESTINIAN PARTICIPATION. ISRAELI POSITION ON PALESTINIAN PARTICIPATION REMAINS UNALTERED, ALTHOUGH FM ALLON DID SAY THAT, WHILE ISRAEL WOULD NOT DEAL WITH PALESTINIANS IN JORDANIAN DELEGATION AS PLO REPRESENTATIVES, IT WOULD NOT CHECK CREDENTIALS. THIS TO A DEGREE CONSTITUTES A RENDERING OF THE STANDARD ISRAELI POSITION IN MORE POSITIVE TERMS. EGYPT FAVORS A SEPARATE PALESTINIAN DELEGATION; SYRIA PREFERS A SINGLE ARAB DELEGATION BUT DID NOT RULE OUT A COMBINED JORDANIAN/PALESTINIAN DELEGATION.

8. ATHERTON ADDED THAT EGYPT AND MORE SIGNIFICANTLY SYRIA VOLUNTEERED THAT ISSUE OF PALESTINIAN PARTICIPATION WAS IN FIRST INSTANCE AN ARAB PROBLEM. ARABS RECOGNIZED THAT
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THEY HAVE CERTAIN AMOUNT OF PREPARATORY WORK TO DO IN THIS RESPECT BEFORE GENEVA CONFERENCE. FM FAHMY INDICATED CONFIDENCE THAT PALESTINIAN NATIONAL COUNCIL (PNC) WOULD PRODUCE CHANGES IN CHARTER. GUYER REPLIED THAT ON THE CONTRARY PLO OFFICIAL BASIL AQL HAD TOLD THEM THAT HE DID NOT EXPECT MUCH FROM THE PNC. EGYPT, SYRIA, AND SAUDI

ARABIA WERE WORKING ON PALESTINIAN LEADERSHIP AND ON QUESTION OF COMPOSITION ON THE PNC. GUYER ADDED THAT THEY WERE ALSO TOLD THAT PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE CHARTER WERE REQUIRED BY THE PNC CONSTITUTION TO BE HELD FOR TWO MONTHS BEFORE FINAL ACTION COULD BE TAKEN. ATHERTON NOTED THAT NONETHELESS FAHMY WAS OPTIMISTIC THAT MODERATES WOULD ATTEMPT TO CHANGE THE CHARTER.

9. URQUHART RAISED QUESTION OF SADAT'S PROPOSAL FOR A JORDANIAN/PALESTINIAN LINK. A WEST BANK LINK WITH JORDAN COULD BE VIEWED AS STEP TOWARD OVERCOMING THIS HURDLE VIS-A-VIS ISRAEL. ATHERTON NOTED SADAT HAD STATED THAT SUCH A CONFEDERATION SHOULD BE AGREED UPON AND FORMALLY DECLARED BEFORE GENEVA. THERE WOULD BE TWO SOVEREIGNTIES LINKED IN CONFEDERATION, AS PROPOSED BY SADAT.

10. TURNING TO THE MAJOR ISSUES OF SUBSTANCE, ATHERTOM REMARKED THAT ISRAEL EMPHASIZED THAT THE NATURE OF PEACE MUST BE MORE THAN THE ABSENCE OF WAR; THERE MUST BE AGREEMENT ON THE NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS, OPEN BORDERS, TRADE, CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL EXCHANGES, FORMAL RECOGNITION, ETC. ISRAEL POINTS OUT THAT THESE CONCESSIONS ARE NECESSARY AS EVIDENCE THAT THERE HAS BEEN A CHANGE IN ARAB POSITION, PUTTING FLESH ON THE BONES OF A PEACE AGREEMENT. SADAT AND ASAD HELD THE SAME LANGUAGE ON THE NATURE OF PEACE, I.E., AN END OF THE STATE OF WAR MEANS ESTABLISHMENT OF A STATE OF PEACE. AGREEMENTS ON TRADE, EXCHANGES OF PEOPLE AND IDEAS, ETC. IS EACH NATION'S SOVEREIGN RIGHT. SECRETARY INDICATED IN CAIRO AND
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DAMASCUS THAT ISRAEL PLACES STRESS ON COMPREHENSIVE NATURE OF PEACE, TO WHICH SADAT AND ASAD BOTH INDICATED THAT IF RESULTS IN OTHER AREAS ARE GOOD, SUCH RELATIONS COULD ULTIMATELY EVOLVE. JORDAN, ON THE OTHER HAND, MADE POINT THAT IT WAS IMPORTANT FOR ISRAEL NOT TO FEEL ISOLATED, IT SHOULD VIEW ITSELF AS INTEGRAL PART OF THE AREA.

11. CONCERNING THE SECOND SUBSTANTIVE ISSUE -- WITHDRAWAL FROM OCCUPIED TERRITORIES -- ISRAEL MADE CLEAR THAT THERE COULD NOT BE A RETURN TO 1967 BORDERS. DEFENSIBLE BORDERS UNDER ISRAELI CONTROL, NOT NECESSARILY ISRAELI SOVEREIGNTY, WAS STRESSED BY ISRAELI SIDE. ON OTHER HAND, SADAT AND

ASAD BOTH SAID FLATLY THAT BORDERS OF 1967 MUST BE MADE THE FINAL INTERNATIONAL BORDERS, WHILE INDICATING WILLINGNESS TO CONSIDER SPECIAL SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS -- E.G., DEMILITARIZED ZONES AND WARNING STATIONS .

12. FINAL SUBSTANTIVE ISSUE OF PALESTINIAN ASPECT BROUGHT FORTH ESTABLISHED POSITIONS. ISRAEL WANTS PALESTINIAN ISSUE TO BE SETTLED IN CONTEXT OF JORDANIAN STATE, NOT TWO

SOVEREIGNTIES LINKED IN CONFEDERATION. ASAD DID NOT RULE OUT SADAT'S CONFEDERATION IDEA BUT SAID IT HAD ONLY BEEN DISCUSSED IN PRINCIPLE. HUSSEIN SUPPORTED CONFEDERATION PROPOSAL WHICH HE PUT FORTH SEVERAL YEARS AGO. NONE OF THE ARABS WERE PRECISE ON QUESTION OF LINKAGE. ATHERTON ADDED THAT IMPORTANT ASPECT THROUGHOUT DISCUSSION OF SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES WAS ARAB EFFORT TO LOOK FOR WAYS, ALBEIT THEIR THINKING REMAINED AMORPHOUS, TO MEET ISRAELI CONCERNS ABOUT INDEPENDENT PALESTINIAN STATE.

13. FINALLY, ON MODALITIES FOR RECONVENING GENEVA, ISRAEL INDICATED IT CONTINUES TO FAVOR THE CONFERENCE AS CONSTITUTING A PRO FORMA UMBRELLA, WITH THE REAL NEGOTIATIONS TAKING PLACE ON BILATERAL BASIS, ELSEWHERE, AND PARTICULARLY WITHOUT THE SOVIETS IN THE WAY. EGYPT
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PREFERS WORKING GROUPS ON BILATERAL BASIS, WHEREAS SYRIA AND JORDAN WANT FUNCTIONAL WORKING GROUPS WITH AN ARAB DELEGATION ON ONE SIDE AND ISRAEL ON THE OTHER.
VANCE

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